

Acts Chapter 20

Acts 20:1 "And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto [him] the disciples, and embraced [them], and departed for to go into Macedonia."

“Departed”: Paul departed on his trip to Jerusalem via Greece (see note on 19:21).

“Macedonia” (see note on 16:9).

In the last lesson, we had seen Demetrius, and the other silversmiths, who made a living engraving figures of the false goddess Diana, grabbing two of Paul's companions and bringing them to open trial. They were released after they decided there were no charges.

Now we see Paul warmly greeting the accused. Paul lost no time in getting out of this evil city of Ephesus. He and his companions go back to Macedonia. Probably, Priscilla and Aquila left at this time also.

Acts 20:2 "And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,"

“Gone over those parts”: Macedonia and Achaia (see note on 19:21).

We see here, that Paul and his companions ministered along the way. They were checking still on churches they had already started. Perhaps, they were setting standard doctrine for the Christians at this time. He probably thought them to be doing okay, and proceeded on to Greece.

Acts 20:3 "And [there] abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia."

“Three months”: Most or all of it were likely spent in Corinth.

“When ... Jews laid wait for him” (see 9:20, 23; 13:45; 14:2, 19; 17:5-9, 13; 18:6, 12-13; 19:9; 21:27-36; 23:12-15). Tragically, most of the opposition to Paul's ministry stemmed from his fellow countrymen (2 Cor. 11:26).

The Jewish community of Corinth hated Paul because of its humiliating debacle before Gallio (18:12-17), and the stunning conversions of two of its most prominent leaders, Crispus (18:8), and Sosthenes (18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1). Luke does not record the details of the Jews' plot, but it undoubtedly involved murdering Paul during the voyage to Palestine.

The apostle would have been an easy target on a small ship packed with Jewish pilgrims. Because of that danger, Paul canceled his plans to sail from Greece to Syria. Instead, he decided to go north into Macedonia, cross the Aegean Sea to Asia Minor, and catch another ship from there.

That delay cost Paul his opportunity to reach Palestine in time for Passover, but he hurried to be there in time for Pentecost (verse 16).

We do know that Paul was very interested in these people, and he stayed three months preaching there. These Jews are probably the angry ones from Corinth, and they really are plotting to kill Paul. Somehow Paul finds out their evil plan, and changes his plan to sail to Syria. It will be safer to go by Macedonia, so Paul changes his plans.

Acts 20:4 "And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."

“Sopater of Berea ... Trophimus”: Paul’s traveling companions came from the various provinces in which he had ministered. These men were likely the official representatives of their churches, chosen to accompany Paul as he took the offering to Jerusalem (see note on 19:21; 1 Corinthians 16:3-4).

The men traveling with Paul at the end of this journey are probably those delegated by their churches to carry offerings for the collection Paul is taking to the needy Judean Christians (see 24:17; Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. Chapters 8 and 9).

The name Sopater means savior of his father. This is the first mention of Sopater. We do find out that he was a product of Paul's ministry in Berea. Secundus is first mentioned here, as well. His name means second. Tychicus means fortuitous, fortuitous means happening by chance.

Tychicus is mentioned again (in Colossians 4:7-8 and in Ephesians 6:21-22). Paul speaks very highly of him, calling him a faithful minister and a beloved brother. It seems when Paul could not go to a particular church, he would many times send Tychicus to tell of his affairs to them.

Again (in Titus 3:12), Paul sends him on a mission for him, and (in 2 Timothy 4:12), we see Paul sending Tychicus to Ephesus. It appears that Trophimus was a brother to Tychicus. Trophimus is a Greek name which means nourishing. (In 2 Timothy 4:20), Paul writes that he left Trophimus in ill health at Miletum.

Acts 20:5 "These going before tarried for us at Troas."

“For us”: The first person plural pronoun reveals that Luke rejoined Paul in Philippi (verse 6). Being a Gentle, he was able to remain there to minister after Paul and Silas were forced to leave (16:20, 39-40). This verse begins the second of the three “we passages”, in which Luke accompanied Paul on his travels.

“Troas” was an important seaport on the Aegean Sea in northwest Asia Minor and was the main port between Asia Minor and Macedonia (Europe). It was the ideal place for God to lead Paul when sending him into Europe with the gospel (16:6-10).

Troas was 10 miles south of ancient Troy, made famous by Homer. Troas was founded by the successors of Alexander the Great in 300 B.C. and named Alexandria Troas. Paul was in Troas at least three times. Early in Paul's second missionary journey, while at Troas, he received the vision leading him to Macedonia.

Luke, the author of Acts, apparently joined the missionary party at Troas, for he begins to use the first person pronoun (we), to narrate the events (16:10). About seven years later, at the end of the third journey, Paul entered Troas for the second and third times. When he first left Ephesus on his way to Macedonia (verses 1-2); he passed through Troas preaching the gospel and expecting to meet Titus there (2 Cor. 2:12).

Then, after several months in Macedonia and Achaia, he spent seven days in Troas (verses 5-6). Paul evidently had a fourth visit, during which he left some essential possessions that he later needed during his second Roman imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:13).

It appears that all these others went ahead of Paul.

Acts 20:6 "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days."

"From Philippi": Paul, along with Luke, and possibly Titus, crossed the Aegean Sea from Philippi to Troas. That crossing, due to unfavorable winds, took 5 days; Paul's earlier crossing from Troas to Neapolis (Philippi's port) had taken only two days (16:11). In Troas, they were reunited with the rest of their party.

"Days of unleavened bread": I.e., Passover (Exodus 12:17).

Luke, the author of the book, rejoins Paul at "Philippi" as indicated by "we" (see the note on 16:10).

This tells us that this happens in the early spring. Unleavened Bread and Passover are about the time Easter occurs. This trip of five days should not have taken but two, so it must have been a troublesome trip. This seven day stay was probably occasioned because it was the seventh day that would have been the Lord's Day (the first day of the week).

Acts 20:7 "And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

"The first day of the week": Sunday, the day the church gathered for worship, because it was the day of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; 1 Cor. 16:2). The writings of the early church Fathers confirm that the church continued to meet on Sunday after the beginning of the New Testament period.

Scripture does not require Christians to observe the Saturday Sabbath:

- (1) The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 31:16-17; Nehemiah 9:14; Ezek. 20:12), whereas Christians are under the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3; Heb. 8);
- (2) There is no New Testament command to keep the Sabbath;
- (3) The first command to keep the Sabbath was not until the time of Moses (Exodus 20:8),
- (4) The Jerusalem Council (chapter 15), did not order Gentile believers to keep the Sabbath;
- (5) Paul never cautioned Christians about breaking the Sabbath; and
- (6) The New Testament explicitly teaches that Sabbath keeping was not a requirement (see notes on Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:10-11; Col. 2:16-17).

“To break bread”: The common meal associated with the communion service (1 Cor. 11:20-22).

This passage provides the clearest evidence that the New Testament churches assembled on “the first day of the week.” In fact, this was the primary service of the week. “Paul” stayed in Troas one full week. Then on Sunday, “when the disciples came together to break bread; Paul preached unto them.”

He consistently preached on the Jewish Sabbath, because that was the day the Jews would gather in the synagogues. On Sunday, it would be virtually empty. But when Paul gathered for fellowship with the church it was on Sunday, as revealed here and (in 1 Corinthians 16:2). Sunday was the day they received offerings; Sunday was the day they observed the Lord’s Supper.

The teachings of the apostles agree with this practice. Only once do the apostles mention the Sabbath in teaching its proper place (Col. 2:16). Several other times, reference is clearly made to the Sabbath (Rom. 14:5-6; Gal 4:9-11). In each of these passages Christians are urged not to allow the Sabbath to become an issue.

Normally, Christians observe Sunday because of Christ’s resurrection on Sunday and because of the early church’s example. Neither Saturday nor Sunday is however, the Christians Sabbath. We worship a Person, not a day. Every day is to be holy to the Lord. Remember the weekday to keep it holy.

We see here, that Paul's message was a long one. It lengthened into the night, even unto midnight. They just did not want to let go of Paul. In these early days of the church, there was much time spent in teaching the newcomers the doctrine of Christianity.

They all needed to share that they might gain strength from each other. Even Paul needed to know that he was not the only Christian in the world.

Acts 20:8 "And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together."

“Lights”: The fumes given off by these oil-burning lamps help explain why Eutychus fell asleep (verse 9).

“Upper chamber”: See note on 1:13. The early church met in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col 4:15; Philemon 2); the first church buildings date from the third century.

Acts 20:9 "And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead."

“Young man”: The Greek word suggests he was between 7 and 14 years old. His youth, the fumes from the lamps, and the lateness of the hour (verse 7), gradually overcame his resistance. He dozed off, fell out of the open window and was killed.

This fall would have been 24 feet or more. This young man falling asleep, while Paul was preaching, might encourage ministers today, who have people fall asleep while they are preaching. It is not so bad, if they did this to Paul. Probably, he was sitting in the window to get a breath of fresh air. Eutychus means good fortune. We will find that he is fortunate.

Acts 20:10 "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing [him] said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."

“For his life is in him”: This does not mean that he had not died, but that his life had been restored. As a physician, Luke knew whether someone had died, as he plainly states (verse 9), was the case with Eutychus.

We see here, that his fall was to glorify God. Paul falls on him (to pray with great power), and then announces that he is alive. God restored the man completely.

Acts 20:11 "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

This is speaking of Paul going right back to ministering. Perhaps, modern ministers should take note of this powerful man of God who taught the Word until the break of day. This type of preaching and teaching is very pleasing to God. When the ministry lasts that long, God knows you mean business.

Acts 20:12 "And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."

This would be a time to shout praises to God! The young man is alive. God has performed a miracle.

Acts 20:13 "And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot."

“Assos”: Located 20 miles south of Troas, across the neck of a small peninsula.

“Go afoot”: Because the ship had to sail around the peninsula, Paul could have arrived in Assos not long after it did. Paul presumably chose to walk to Assos so he could continue to teach the believers from Troas who accompanied him.

It appears that Luke (we), and some of the others took a ship to Assos, and waited there for Paul who walked there.

Acts 20:14 "And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene."

“Mitylene”: Chief city of the island of Lesbos, south of Assos.

Here, Paul entered the ship with them and went on to Mitylene. This was the chief city of the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea. This area was famous for riches and literary character.

Acts 20:15 "And we sailed thence, and came the next [day] over against Chios; and the next [day] we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next [day] we came to Miletus."

“Chios”: An island off the coast of Asia Minor, south of Lesbos. Chios was the birthplace of the Greek poet Homer.

“Samos”: An island off the coast near Ephesus. The famed mathematician Pythagoras was born on Samos.

“Miletus”: A city in Asia Minor, about 30 miles south of Ephesus.

This is just a detailed description of their journey. It does not appear that Paul ministered at these ports along the way. The destination was Miletus, which was thirty-six miles south of Ephesus. This was a very evil place. They had a temple of Apollo here. Paul will minister here.

Acts 20:16 "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

“Determined to sail by Ephesus”: Still trying to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost (50 days after Passover), Paul decided to have the elders (i.e., pastors, overseers) of the Ephesian church meet him in Miletus. We see again, Paul rushing to get back to Jerusalem to keep a feast, this time the feast of Pentecost.

Pentecost occurs fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus so this occurs on our calendar in early June. If he had stopped at Ephesus, they would have insisted on him staying a while, so Paul deliberately sails by Ephesus.

It is a mystery why Paul seemed so compelled to keep the Jewish feasts. Possibly, he was doing this so he might be able to minister more easily to the Jews. It seems that many of the early

Christians still clung to the feasts and sacrifices, until the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, cutting the ties.

Acts Chapter 20 Questions

1. As soon as the uproar was over, where did Paul go?
2. Who had caused the problem?
3. What false goddess was the problem over?
4. Who probably left this evil city Ephesus when Paul left, two people?
5. In verse 2, we learned that Paul went where?
6. How long did they stay there?
7. Who laid wait for Paul to capture him?
8. Where had he planned to sail to?
9. Where did he go instead?
10. Who went with Paul?
11. What does Sopater mean?
12. What does Secundus mean?
13. What does Tychicus mean?
14. What two nice things does Paul call Tychicus?
15. Who was Trophimus?
16. What feast was just over as they sailed from Philippi?
17. How many days did they stay at Troas?
18. What day did the disciples come together to break bread?
19. How long did Paul preach here?
20. What happened that caused a pause in Paul's message?

21. What did Paul do to revive him?
22. When did Paul depart?
23. What happened to the young man that fell out of the window?
24. How did Paul go to Assos?
25. Who is the "we" in verse 13?
26. When they took Paul in the ship, where did they go?
27. Why had Paul sailed by Ephesus and not stopped?
28. When does Pentecost occur?